

SOCIALIST STUDIES

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**OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF
THE SOCIALIST PARTY
OF GREAT BRITAIN**

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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

ALL ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP TO...
The Socialist Party of Great Britain,
71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB

WHY WE NEED SOCIALISM NOW

According to the United Nations there are over one billion unemployed workers throughout the world. Germany has 4.4 million unemployed alone. Raw resources are left unused. Food is destroyed or not grown. Factories lay idle. Goods are stockpiled. All because Capitalism cannot make a profit.

Governments and social reforms have failed. So have the hundreds of charities. No government policy can stop crises, depressions and unemployment. No social reform can deal with the drive and the problems caused by the profit motive. Charities only cope ineffectually with the effects of producing for profit, not the Capitalist cause.

It is no good placing trust in the economists and politicians. They are all for Capitalism. Their thinking is chained by prices and price movements, markets and market forces, buying and selling, money and profit.

At the same time, pressing social problems need to be resolved. *The Times* (8 April 1998) reported that 600,000 women world-wide and each year needlessly die giving birth - one woman every minute. It would cost \$2 (£1.25) a day to provide the health-care which is available but can't be provided because there is no profit in providing it. The deaths will continue. Nothing, say the economists and politicians, must upset the markets and profit-making.

There are 800,000 million people throughout the world suffering acute hunger, according to the charity Christian Aid. They suffer hunger because they do not have access to land, seed, tools, technology and education all of which exist but are owned by a parasitic minority class of capitalists. Capitalists only produce if there is a profit to be made despite real human needs going unmet. There is nothing immoral about this state of affairs. This is Capitalism. Capitalists have to make profits or go under.

Politicians and Government Ministers tell us that there is no alternative to this insane, irrational and antisocial Capitalist system. They tell us we live in the best of all possible worlds. They would. For the capitalist class it is the best of all possible worlds.

They tell us that there is no alternative. It is, of course, a lie. There is an alternative. And that alternative is Socialism. It is a social system in which production would take place directly to meet human needs wherever they occurred. It is a social system which would provide the framework to solve the social problems we face today.

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT CAPITALISM

More than 1 billion people throughout the world live in absolute poverty.

400 million people consume less than 80% of their basic food needs, 2000 calories a day. Over time this results in malnutrition, susceptibility to disease and stunted growth.

13-18 million people, most of them women and children, die of hunger every year.

Source: World Development Report (World Bank)

SIR ISAIAH BERLIN AND KARL MARX

The death of Professor Sir Isaiah Berlin, late of All Souls and Wolfson Colleges, Oxford, produced the usual tributes from his many admirers both in politics and journalism. The *Sunday Telegraph* had, weeks before his death, referred to him as the wisest man in England. Words like "*genius, talented and influential*" were used to describe his many accomplishments. He was acclaimed as an authority on Marxism and International Socialism. Moreover, we were told he actually witnessed the Russian revolution. But his crowning glory apparently lay in the fact that, in 1939, he had written a book entitled '*Marx, his Life and his Environment*'. This book ran into four editions and was re-printed in 1983, and is used in universities both here and abroad. It contains many errors, it is hostile to Marx in a subtle way but without putting forward any positive argument against Marx's main theories: the theory of social development and the Labour Theory of Value. Throughout the book it becomes evident that Sir Isaiah wants to wound Marx but is afraid to strike.

In an interview with Steven Lukes of the *Sunday Telegraph* (21 Sept. 1997) Sir Isaiah told us that he was commissioned to write the book on Marx by the then Home University Library. He was their third choice. Professor Harold Laski and the present Lord Longford having both declined. Up to that time, on his own admission, he had never read a word of Marx or understood a word of Hegel but subsequently, in his own words, "*he read more Marx than was good for anyone*" (*Sunday Telegraph* - 21 September 1997). This dig at Marx, published over fifty years later, explains his hostility and also his superficial treatment of Marxist theories. This is inevitable when the author has no prior knowledge of the subject and is dependent on hurried research. Consequently, the quality of the book is poor as well as being misleading. Paraphrasing is used instead of direct quotation. Asserted opinion replaces argument. The result is a series of emasculated summaries, purporting to be Marx's main ideas together with a number of elementary errors.

The book has the recurring theme that the ideas expressed by Marx in *Capital* were the original work of other people. Although Berlin throughout names a number of people he produces no particular writer to support his claim. On page 10 of his book on Marx he says:

It may well be that there is not one among his (Marx's) views where the embryo cannot be found in some previous or contemporary writer. Thus the doctrine of common ownership founded upon the abolition of private property has probably in one form or another, possessed adherents at most historical periods over two thousand years ... Whether Marx derived it from Morely or Mobley or Babeuf and his followers, or from some German account of French Communism is too purely academic to be of great importance.

This means that he doesn't know and is unable to name any particular writer! Then, after having raised the issue, he tells us that it doesn't matter anyway. This is dishonest. He continues by informing us that "*Historical Materialism, of a sort*" is to be found fully developed in a treatise by Holbach, printed almost a century before, which in turn owes much to Spinoza, a modified form of which was re-stated in Marx's day by Feuerbach.

Berlin's statement about the abolition of private property (Capitalism) and the establishment of communal property (Socialism) being around for 2,000 years is totally misleading considering the time factor alone. Capitalism in its developed form is scarce 300 years old.

Socialism (common property) can only be conceived as a system in its own right when Capitalism has developed the productive forces necessary to support the new system of Socialism and that necessarily includes the bringing into existence of a wage earning class. Until the creation of this class, the concept of Socialism is impossible. Before the advent of Capitalism, the working class did not exist and only a class conscious working class can abolish

Capitalism by getting control of the political machinery through the franchise and using it to dispossess the capitalists of their property.

To associate the Marxist theory with Berlin's Utopians, ancient and modern, who proclaim abstract ideas of equality and morality without regard to the historical economic conditions is to repudiate the facts of history. The same applies to his remarks on Historical Materialism. Again we get the vague and misleading statement:

"Historical Materialism of a sort" was fully developed by Holbach a century before (1748), who got it from Spinoza (1632-77) and was re-stated in modified form by Ludwig Feuerbach.

No theory of social development (Historical Materialism) remotely resembling that of Marx and Engels, published in 1845, was ever written by Feuerbach or anyone else. Feuerbach was an idealist, a disciple of Hegel. According to Engels, while

Feuerbach correctly held that scientific materialism was the foundation of the building of human knowledge, it was not the building itself. For we live not only in nature, but in human society, and this has its theory of development and its science, no less than Nature. It was necessary therefore to bring the science of Society, that is the so-called historical and philosophical sciences into harmony with the materialistic foundations and to re-build upon them.

Bu, this was not granted to Feuerbach. Here he stuck in spite of the "foundations" held in the confining bonds of idealism, and to this he testified in the words .. "Backwards I fully agree with the materialists, but not forwards". (Feuerbach: Root of Socialist Philosophy quoted in Engels; Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy, p.26 Moscow edition, 1978.)

Marx's brief essays on Feuerbach, written in 1845, are appendices to Engels' book (which was written in 1888) after Marx's death. The concluding essay contains the famous phrase:

Philosophers have only interpreted the world differently, but the point is to change it.

After resurrecting Hegel (who Berlin didn't understand), whose ideas Marx and Engels abandoned some forty years earlier, Berlin tells us (pp 10-11) that the Labour Theory of Value was derived from John Locke, Adam Smith, David Ricardo and other un-named classical economists while the theory of exploitation and surplus value is found in Fourier, and the theory of the alienation of the proletariat was enunciated by Max Stirner one year before Marx. None of this is new or true. Shortly after Marx's death, there was considerable support for the claim the Karl Rodbertus originated the theories in **Capital** and was "*the secret source and a superior predecessor to Marx*". Engels dealt effectively with this and other similar claims in the Preface to Volume III of **Capital**.

Many of the names above are mentioned in **Capital** together with the difference between their views and those of Marx. However, the important point is the content of the theories themselves and on this aspect Berlin shows his ignorance of Marx.

In trying to summarise industrial expansion, he says:

The more machinery replaces human labour, the lower the rate of profit is bound to fall. (p 179)

This view was opposed to Marx in contrast to the views of Adam Smith and Ricardo. Marx showed that this did not happen because there were counteracting tendencies which cancelled out the rate falling; he gave six

examples in **Capital Volume III**, Chapter XIII. These were factors which reduced the profit fall to that of a mere tendency. Berlin obviously knows nothing of this and proceeds to expose the untenable nature of this alleged Marxist theory:

"If this is really so (the falling rate of profit) why should not the capitalist dispense with machines and increase surplus value by returning to slave labour."

This silly and ignorant remark shows Berlin's disembodied Utopian approach to the real world of Capitalism. This is asking the capitalist to put the toothpaste back in its tube by reversing the course of history. The capitalists do not have a choice nor are they in control of their own system. The system runs them. This idealism of Sir Isaiah again appears in his *Alice in Wonderland* description of the genesis of the working class and capitalist class. The development of the means of production, he says, occurs because:

... certain persons owing to their superior skill, power and enterprise acquire sole control of such instruments and tools and thus find themselves in the position in which they can hire the labour of others by a combination of threats to withhold the necessities of life from them, and by offering more in the form of a regular remuneration than they would receive as regular producers (p 175).

This insipid childishness is supposed to emanate from Marx.

Piracy, conquests, murder, expropriation of the agricultural workers from the land, the real factors in the formation of primitive capital, are not mentioned. Sir Isaiah's views on Socialism and Marxism were clearly deficient. He considered "State Socialism" existed in Russia. He was unable to

distinguish between Marx's early remarks on the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in the early socialist period and the dictatorship of the Russian Communist Party.

Later in life, Berlin supported a number of capitalist causes, including Jewish Nationalism and the formation of the State of Israel. In the course of his lectures on Romanticism he told us:

.. that we must get away from the structure of things - we must create myths.

He certainly acted on his own advice and contributed nothing but diversion to a better understanding of social problems. That is why his capitalist friends are so grateful to him.

We shall deal with Sir Isaiah Berlin's views on Socialism in a future article.

CAPITALISM'S WASTE

The twenty seven advanced economies in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development officially recorded 35 million unemployed in 1994 and an unemployment rate of 8 percent. But, as the Bank for International Settlement has noted, this is artificially low because of all those arbitrarily excluded from the count. The actual unemployment rate, BIS estimated, was as high as 12.5 percent and 2 to 3 percent higher if workers temporarily supported by government training are included. Thus the total may be nearly twice 35 million. A much larger number exists, of course, throughout the world.

Bank for International Settlements Annual Report, 1994 quoted in **One World: Ready or Not; The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism** by W Greider, Penguin 1998

WHAT CAPITALISM DOES TO CHILDREN

Capitalist society has lost any claim to loving and caring for children. The prevailing wars, poverty, hatred and lies signify that as a vision of the future twenty first century it is a nightmare.

Many children grow up aware of living in an unequal society which is uncomfortable, unpredictable and unpleasant. They know that it is a society of "haves" and "have-nots" and to which side of the class divide they belong. Some begin to wonder why a society with the potential to produce so much of quality ends up producing so much waste depriving all children of a decent living and a decent chance to realise their capabilities. A responsible society does indeed owe its children the best it has to offer. When children are properly informed and cared for they do learn to show appreciation and co-operation in spite of what adults might say.

Unfortunately, both children and their parents are politically and socially misinformed about the society in which they are born, exploited and die. They are trained to hold the views and ideas of the ruling class. They are told to pursue class interests which are not their own. They are lied to.

Consider the following typical lies which are served up daily by the media:

The rich are rich because they deserve it.

Poverty is nothing to be ashamed of.

We live in a democracy.

All people are equal under the law.

Schooling is the same as education.

Other people threaten us because they are naturally bad.

Wars are glorious and soldiers are heroes.

We need political leaders.

Workers are incapable of thinking for themselves.

This litany of lies is the staple diet of capitalist politics which workers feed from, making them less susceptible to socialist ideas and the pursuit of their own class interests.

Capitalism has the power and the ability to corrupt both adults and children alike. When a person becomes violent and destructive very little effort is made to find out why. The focus is generally on where and how, or finding a suitable scapegoat. Capitalism will not be blamed. Poverty, discomfort and the unpredictability of class relations will not be considered.

Capitalism's supporters will always claim capitalism is the best of all possible systems. If capitalism is the answer then it must have been a bloody stupid question! Capitalism's tame academics and politicians have to blame people rather than the class environment in which actions take place. Capitalism has to be seen as being immune from criticism. Supporters of capitalism cannot admit that crime is caused by unemployment; that suicide is caused by social alienation and that racism is caused by poverty. All these social problems and causes flow from the conflict, antagonism and violence of a class-divided society. To give an account of social problems in terms of human behaviour is to miss the point. What has to be explained is the cause of human behaviour and that is the social context in which that human behaviour takes place. Social problems are caused by the capitalist system of exploitation, competition and the day to day struggle to exist on wages and salaries.

Of interest, and with a different view, is Socialism. Scientific Socialism is the analysis of social systems and the social relations contained within them. It analyses social problems as class problems created by class ownership and the class struggle. The answer to capitalism and its problems is Socialism. The question we pose is why does capitalism have the potential to create a decent

society for everyone but choose instead to deliberately waste the lives of millions of people, raw resources, and the means to produce things. It does so because of the profit motive and the anti-social pursuit of accumulating capital for the sake of accumulating capital.

The main concern of capitalist society is that the working class keeps on producing social wealth and children for a future labour market. Capitalism also wants a continual supply of workers to fight and die for its bloody, competitive wars and dirty political interests.

When it comes to seeing, feeling and learning, most children (before their minds are filled with the hate, waste and pornography of capitalism) do much better than most adults. Teachers at infant schools do not see racism in children; they do not see violence; they do not see the fear of asking questions. That comes later as young children are corrupted into a system which only sees them as a source of profit or cannon fodder.

And children are corrupted and exploited in the Marxian sense of the word early. According to the United Nations there are an estimated 250 million child labourers around the world between the ages of 5 and 14, half of them working full-time (*Times*, 12 April 1998).

Given an adequate understanding of Socialism and a natural curiosity of the world, children could develop into socialists capable of creating a social system of love and care; of co-operation and harmony. It is high time the world's workers got around to putting happiness and comfort on the agenda for themselves and their children. This cannot be done while they still accept capitalist lies and exploitation, and ignore the possibility of a better future.

L H MORGAN: A REASSESSMENT

With the demise of feminist anthropology and the anti-Marxian "*Structuralism*" of the Levi-Strauss school of anthropology, we take the opportunity to reassert the importance of Lewis Henry Morgan's book, *Ancient Society*, for the understanding of social evolution and the emergence of class society.

We are not dogmaticists. We do recognise that new facts about the past have arisen which were not known to Marx, Engels and Morgan. However, the theoretical argument of all three writers in relation to ethnology and anthropology towers above their insignificant academic rivals.

Since the publication of *Ancient Society* (and Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* based upon Morgan's work and notes left by Marx), no credible alternative theory has been put forward on how to approach the study of anthropology and the questions which need to be asked. Morgan has either been met with intellectual evasion, silence or distortion. Certainly, it is not among the recommended texts for anthropology students in universities where the subject has collapsed into trivia, symbolic subjectivity and the fashionable posing of "post-modern" relativism. One thing is for sure, what is published today as anthropology is written in such pretentious jargon as to make it wholly unreadable and a worthy candidate for *Private Eye's* Pseuds Corner.

This is not the case with *Ancient Society*. It is easy to read and this is probably one of the reasons why it is treated with derision by many of today's academic anthropologists who prize obscurity above clarity. However, it deserves to be read. It was suggested reading for members of the SPGB and, certainly, for those who wished to speak on behalf of the Party.

The Party has always prided itself on its own ability to further socialist

ideas and theory out of the practical requirements of the class struggle and has found in Morgan's work a useful guiding thread in the understanding of social development prior to class society. Unlike other political parties, we are not dependent upon professors to tell us what to think, how to think and which fashionable theory to adopt. The uncritical infusion of anti-socialist and anti-Marxian ideas into the old SPGB during the 1970s and 1980s was a contributing factor to its demise as an effective socialist organisation. The feminist sentiments, for example, expressed against Morgan and Engels in the **Women and Socialism Pamphlet**, published in 1984, was symptomatic of this tendency towards political sterility.

And it is a not surprising reflection, either, of current academic publishing, with its pursuit of profit rather than knowledge, that it is content to wallow uncritically in the ephemeral, crass and pornographic; so that a book of such brilliance - and this is how Engels and Marx saw **Ancient Society** - should remain difficult to obtain even from second-hand bookshops.

To help in a long overdue rehabilitation of Morgan's work, **Ancient Society**, we republish below - in its entirety, an article from the **Socialist Standard** of September 1949.

Morgan's Ancient Society

Civilization is only a tiny fraction of man's long span of life on this earth. It commenced when man had settled down in agricultural communities and had discovered the art of writing. Civilization is called historic society because we learn about it from written books. Prehistoric society we learn about from the archaeologist, who digs up the past, the anthropologist, who examines the skeletal remains of early man, and the ethnologist, who examines the way of life of tribal man. From the records accumulated by investigators we learn that historic society is based upon territory - property ownership, whilst prehistoric society was based upon the family -

lanship. That is to say, the bond that knit social groups together in early times was the blood tie; after the advent of civilization it was the property tie.

The man who brought order into our knowledge of early society was an American ethnologist, Lewis Henry Morgan, who spent many years amongst the Iroquois Indians of North America and who was admitted into their group as a blood brother. The result of his studies among those Indians profoundly affected his general view of early development and, with the assistance of the American Smithsonian Society (a society formed to further knowledge of the American Aborigines), he was put in touch with other ethnologists all over the world. After many years of sorting and tabulating the material he had gathered for himself and from what he had received from others, he wrote his book *Ancient Society*, which was an attempt to explain early society as an organised growth and not the haphazard result of accident or of "great men".

When Morgan's book was published it was seized upon by Marx and Engels as containing the real explanation of early social development and the logical forerunner of later history. It explained social development as the result of man's works; of his discoveries and his adaptation to natural forces; of the growing artificial barrier he built between himself and raw nature. In other words, that civilized man was the product of his discoveries and inventions of countless ages.

Whatever modifications in detail were afterwards necessary, Morgan's main outline still holds the field, and later material has helped to fill it out. But Morgan suffered the same fate as Darwin and Marx had suffered from the leading writers of the day. His ideas were too revolutionary; they challenged the inviolability of private property and hence the most valuable part of his work has been largely ignored by professors although it is claimed that scientific men are concerned solely with truth and take no

sides. Even today, when Morgan is quoted, it is nearly always from other books that he wrote, very rarely is *Ancient Society* referred to. In recent years, however, at least one ethnologist of note has given Morgan his due. A C Haddon, in a little book on *Anthropology* says this of Morgan's achievement:

"Morgan was undoubtedly the greatest sociologist of the past century, and in his monumental work (1877) laid a solid foundation for the study of the family and kinship systems; he formulated a scheme of the evolution of the family based on the study of the classificatory system of relationships, of which he was the discoverer". *History of Anthropology*

The following quotations from *Ancient Society* shed some light upon the reason why his book was not warmly received

It is impossible to overestimate the influence of property in the civilization of mankind. It was the power that brought the Aryan-Semitic nations out of barbarism into civilization. The growth of the idea of property in the human mind commenced in feebleness and ended in becoming its master passion. Governments and laws are instituted with primary reference to its creation, protection and enjoyment. It introduced human slavery as an instrument in its production; and, after the experience of several thousand years, it caused the abolition of slavery upon the discovery that a freeman was a better property-making machine (p 505, *Ancient Society*, Macmillan 1877).

Since the advent of civilization, the outgrowth of property has been so immense, its forms so diversified, its uses so expanding and its management so intelligent in the interests of its owners, that it has become, on the part of the people, an unmanageable power. The human mind stands bewildered in the presence of its own creation. The time will come, nevertheless, when

human intelligence will rise to the mastery over property, and define the relations of the state to the property it protects, as well as the obligations and the limits of the rights of its owners. The interests of society are paramount to individual interests, and the two must be brought into just and harmonious relations. A mere property career is not the final destiny of mankind, if progress is to be the law of the future as it has been of the past. The time which has passed away since civilization began is but a fragment of the past duration of man's existence; and but a fragment of the ages yet to come. The dissolution of society bids fair to become the termination of a career of which property is the end and aim; because such a career contains the elements of self-destruction. Democracy in government, brotherhood in society, equality in rights and privileges, and universal education, foreshadow the next higher plane of society to which experience, intelligence and knowledge are steadily tending. It will be a revival in a higher form of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes (p 552).

It is a tribute to Morgan's scientific sincerity that he faced the logical inferences of his studies of the family and property in spite of the fact that he belonged to the privileged section of society, believed privileged classes had been abolished in the United States, and still clung to supernatural ideas.

Morgan divided prehistoric society into two main sections and six subsections or ethnological periods. The two main sections are savagery and barbarism - roughly the old and the new stone age. The three subsections of savagery and of barbarism he marked off by the principle discoveries of the period - fire, the bow and arrow, pottery making, the domestication of animals, the smelting of iron and the art of writing. There is a further general division that can be made. In the early period man was a food gatherer, later he became a food producer. The production of the bow and arrow was a revolution that made him predominantly a hunter

and was the link between food gathering and food producing.

Morgan traces the development of the family from original promiscuity through the development of the gens, with its restrictions upon those who were rightful husbands and wives, up to the time when the development of property introduced the monogamic family (or single husband and wife). He traces the development of the state from the elected war chief to the establishment of hereditary military leaders and kings; from the tribal council to the government. He traces the development of property from its probable beginning after the domestication of animals up to its fully fledged form in Greek and Roman times. He showed how the intrusion of property destroyed the old primitive communities based upon the family and established in their place private property society with its constant class struggles. He also showed that the development of society was an evolutionary process which could not stop with the establishment of capitalism. He made it clear that just as in the past different forms of the state, the family and private property had come into existence and passed away so likewise the present forms were doomed and would give place to a higher form from which the state and private property would be absent.

Morgan's work has completely disposed of the myth that property, the family and the state, as we know them to-day, are eternal. He showed that they only appeared very late in man's history and must inevitably disappear. He was not a socialist and evidently knew little, if anything, about Socialism, but, unintentionally, he did remarkable work to help forward the socialist movement.

Engels, in his own *Origin of the Family*, summarises Morgan's work and enriches it with additions and corrections of his own. He makes it clear that Morgan had independently discovered and applied the materialist conception of history; Engels also showed how Morgan, by solving the puzzle of ancient society, had supplied the prehistoric prelude to Marx's work and explained how class society had come into existence.

WHEN CAPITALIST FRIENDS FALL OUT

The present Labour Government tries to make workers believe that Saddam Hussain has always been the enemy. Not so.

During the Iran-Iraq war when over a million workers were killed, British arms dealers fell over themselves in order to sell arms to Iraq. They also sold the knowledge to create chemical warfare plants and production processes. In fact, the very weapons of mass destruction the United Nations investigation team in Iraq is trying to find and destroy.

One of New Labour's promises was open government. There was to be no more secrecy. You can even telephone M16 at their Art Deco palace along the Thames. To test the sincerity of this "new openness" a question about the chemical warfare production in Iraq was put to the government by Llew Smith, Labour MP for Blaenau, Gwent. Mr Smith asked how much of the equipment found by UN inspectors in Iraq had been made in Britain. Mr Smith went on to ask for the list of manufacturers.

Mr Smith was not given the information he had asked for. It is not official policy to disclose who supplied Mr Hussain with his nuclear and chemical-biological weapons. Open government was exposed for the hypocrisy, deceit, subterfuge and cant capitalist politics is in reality, no matter whether it is the politics of the Labour Party or Tories.

The reply from Tony Lloyd, a Junior Minister, is a gem for an example of the deceitful and Machiavellian dissembling found in capitalist politics:

It is not our practice to reveal the identity of British manufacturers whose equipment has been found by UNSCOM in Iraq, because it is UNSCOM'S practice to disclose such information to government on a confidential basis.

(Hansard, 25 February 1998)

For workers the lesson of war is quite clear. Do not take sides in capitalist conflicts. Do not have anything to do with capitalist politics. Instead, workers should become socialists and take conscious and political action to abolish capitalism and its wars and to replace it with Socialism.

CAPITALISM KILLS

It was no surprise to socialists that the British Government had sent the ingredients necessary for the production of anthrax to Iraq. That they should have sent it after the Gulf War is also no surprise.

During World War 2 the Scottish island of Gruinard was used for the purpose of experimenting in the production of anthrax with the intention of dropping it on the Germans.

The main reason it was not used was that the war ended before this weapon was ready.

The experiments must have been successful because Gruinard was still a prohibited area in the 1970s. This shows the lengths the capitalist class and its politicians will go in order to protect their profits.

The working class should take this matter very seriously. They should recognise that groups like CND are utterly ineffective to stop the production of armaments since weapons are a vital necessity under Capitalism, based as it is on competitive conflicts between capitalist states. What is required is Socialism and common ownership and democratic control over what is produced. With Socialism these weapons of mass destruction would not be produced.

What we do not have at the present moment is a sufficient quantity of workers with socialist understanding and knowledge to see that the production of deadly chemicals for war - like anthrax - is caused by the competition between nation states.

CLAPHAM AND THE IMMEDIATE ABOLITION OF THE STATE

We have received a letter from A Northall (30 December 1997) who believes that there exist only minor differences between ourselves and the Clapham organisation. Our reply is as follows:

.. Concerning the points raised in your letter of 30 December, it might appear that there are minor differences between ourselves and the Clapham organisation, but this is not the case. Whilst we have one objective, they have a number of so-called secondary objectives. For example, they supported the Polish reformist political organisation - Solidarity. They also supported parties in Eastern Europe in the 1980s who were seeking to establish democratic governments in dictatorial regimes. This support for democracy did not extend to their comrades within their own organisation. We were summarily expelled and the safeguards set out in the rule book protecting members' rights were shamefully ignored. The Party's historic policy on reforms, viz "we do not support beneficial reforms or oppose harmful reforms" has now been altered to read that they now support reforms "on their merits".

Members of the Clapham organisation can now join reformist organisations like Women's Liberation, Amnesty International, and the Campaign Against Physical Punishment for Children. None of these have anything to do with Socialism, and in fact detract from our case, apart from being in breach of Principle 7.

The position of the State has been considerably altered in the Socialist Standard from that explicitly stated in the 1984 resolution: "This Conference affirms that Socialism will entail the immediate abolition of and not the gradual decline of the State". This resolution was in breach of Clause 6 of the Declaration of Principles which stresses the need for the

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working class to gain control of the machinery of government including the armed forces and convert them into the agent of emancipation. The 1984 resolution is in flat contradiction of this principle. Obviously you cannot use the machinery of government as the agent of emancipation if it is immediately abolished when a socialist majority gain political power at the ballot box. The consequent back-peddling in the *Socialist Standard* is simply to obscure the issue, particularly the dishonest statement that the nature of the 1984 resolution was to re-affirm the Party's case on the state.

If you are in favour of the immediate abolition of the State when Socialism is established then you are in favour of its immediate abolition here and now, which is of course the anarchist position. It was for this reason that the resolution was passed. The intention was to broaden the base of the Party case to include those who agreed with its Object but disagreed with the need for a class-conscious working class to capture control of the political machinery.

You will notice that the *Socialist Standard* no longer publishes articles which even mention this essential point. The article entitled *Marx's Basic Theory* in the February 1998 issue is a classic example of how the issue of the capture of political power is evaded:

"... before it is possible to have Socialism a majority of the working class must understand what needs to be done".

We are not told what needs to be done.

Another vague and ambiguous phrase:

"... the change from Capitalism to Socialism requires the deliberate action of men and women. The task must be carried out democratically."

What task?

The article continues:

"... changes to the economic structure have to be brought about through action on the political field".

What may we ask is the type of action required? Is it reformist action? That too can change the economic structure of society, but not in the direction of Socialism.

The article finally speaks of the need to win the "battle of democracy" in order to dispossess the capitalist class. Winning the battle for democracy from a Marxist point of view means the conquest of political power. Nowhere does the article state this vital and necessary aim of a Socialist revolutionary party.

A further article in the same issue talks about revolutionary political action by a majority. It does not specify what revolutionary action is nor does it stress the need for that majority to understand Socialism.

*Recently the Clapham Party published a pamphlet **The Market must Go!** This included a number of chapters from the SPGB's **Questions of the Day** pamphlet, but significantly left out the chapter on **Parliament** which had appeared in every edition of **Questions of the Day**. Evidently the Clapham Party do not support the SPGB's argument about the necessity for Socialist workers to gain control of Parliament in order to end the class system. The Party case leads logically to the capture of Parliament and it is the political goal of the revolutionary socialist movement. To omit this is an act of political ignorance and opportunism, and signifies the huge gulf which exists between the Socialist Party of Great Britain and the Clapham Party.*

In conclusion, the question of the State being immediately abolished is

utter rubbish. Unless Socialists use the power of the machinery of government to dispossess the capitalist class they will be unable to establish Socialism. We find it inconceivable that intelligent Socialists of a future generation would even consider such an act of monumental stupidity.

PARTY NEWS

April 26th saw the last of our lectures in the 1997-98 series. We have held audiences throughout of between 20 - 25 with some interesting question and discussion periods. We shall re-commence in October next, and the list of dates will appear in No. 29 due out in September.

Many Trade Unions and the Labour Party are holding their Conferences this year in the North, and the extra travelling for the few members who can be present does provide difficulties. However, we shall try and attend as many as possible. We were able to get to The Community and Youth Workers Conference held recently in Southampton. In view of the atrocious weather, the organisers invited us to put up our stand in the Hall, and at the end of the proceedings the Chairman thanked us for being there and extended an invitation to attend their Conference next year in Derby. Sales of pamphlets amounted to £18.80.

the May Day Festival was held this year on May 3rd in Finsbury Park, North London. We had a prominent site and the Party name was well displayed. Good discussions were held with people of varied political persuasions. We were able to offer for sale a number of political books, and with our wide assortment of pamphlets, total sales reached £66.40, a substantial increase on previous years. Our pamphlets accounted for half this amount, including 42 copies of our Women and Socialism pamphlet which is now in its 2nd reprint. In addition 200 copies of Socialist Studies and a similar number of Introductory leaflets were distributed. 4 members and 2 sympathisers helped out during what was an enjoyable and fruitful day.

Our first meeting outdoors in Hyde Park in May gave us an opportunity for 1½ hours to put our case to an attentive and good humoured crowd including many tourists. Several copies of our journal were distributed, and various pamphlets found their way into the hands of some of the audience.

We shall have our usual stand at the Tolpuddle Rally on Sunday July 18th and look forward to seeing any of our readers there.

Finally a reminder about our 7th Summer School on Sunday 28th June. Full details in this issue. admission is free; there is a light buffet lunch and we can promise an interesting and enjoyable session.

THE POWERS OF PARLIAMENT

It has been bandied about by irresponsible people that Parliament is a gas-house and a talking-shop, and no good whatever to the working class to achieve their emancipation and to establish Socialism. What is needed, they assert, is direct action.

Such ideas are not only foolish but very dangerous. Direct Action, namely the General Strike, and "*Heavy Civil War*", as advocated by certain people in the early 20s, would leave the powers of State, the Armed Forces, still in the hands of the ruling class. Having still control of the machinery of government, they could still crush the General Strike, and any attempt to seize the factories and the means of production and distribution.

That is why we claim as laid down in our Declaration of Principles, in Section 6, that the working class must organise consciously and politically to obtain control of this machinery of government, to dispossess the ruling class of their ownership of the land and means of wealth production and distribution.

Socialism cannot be established by violence, whether by war or "*heavy civil war*". Neither can it be established by a minority group trying to impose it upon the working class against their will and understanding.

A few examples will prove the powers of Parliament. In April, 1924, the Lotts Road Power Station workers came out on strike, which also involved the London Underground Railway workers. The government of that day, a Labour government, brought in a large number of naval ratings, and quite easily crushed the strike.

In the so-called General Strike of 1926, the ruling class were prepared to mobilise the Armed Forces. If any attempt had been made to seize the factories, railways, etc the ruling class would have made short work of such

attempts. Again, in the fateful week-end of September 1939, before and when war was declared, Parliament, in continual session, passed over 100 emergency regulations and about a dozen short Acts of Parliament. Among them was a fresh military conscription Act, a food rationing Act, and an Act relating to identity cards.

"Socialism cannot be established by violence. It can only be established when the working class, not only of Great Britain, but throughout the world, understanding what Socialism is, are willing to co-operate to establish it. It is much easier to vote and work for Socialism than to die uselessly on some stricken barricade or battlefield" (*The Socialist Standard*, November 1950, pp 174-175).

MINORITY ACTION

Minority action is suicidal folly and could not lead to Socialism even if successful. For unless the immense majority of workers want Socialism there is no possibility of it being established. Even if an insurrectionist minority managed to get control of political power, it could not alter the basic problems and processes of capitalism. It would have to contend with the anti-socialist prejudices of the majority and it might be overthrown in another insurrection.

S.P.G.B. Pamphlet, Questions of the Day 1978, p.12.

HIS MASTER'S VOICE

At a CBI dinner in London *The Times* (23 April 1998), Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, told employers that he did not want to see salary increases beyond inflation. Instead he wanted the gap in productivity between British capitalism and other leading capitalist countries to narrow. He believed workers had a stake in the profitability and competitiveness of the companies they were employed in. He did not want a return to the boom and bust economy of previous governments.

This is the lecture by a capitalist politician who does not understand the economic system which he claims to administer.

There is no causal link between pay increases and inflation. Pay increases do not cause inflation. Inflation is caused by governments pumping out more paper currency and coins than are needed for trade. A wage or a salary is a price like any other commodity. A general rise in prices will mean a rise in wages. Like all capitalist politicians, Brown blames the working class.

Workers sell their labour power and try to gain the highest price. They do this individually and collectively in trade unions. In a boom they are often successful in gaining higher wages and better working conditions. This is what is happening now. But the Labour government would like all the profits in a boom going to the Capitalist class. They do not want workers making gains at the expense of employers' profits.

There is nothing governments can do to stop the trade cycle either. It will be the anarchy of commodity production and exchange which will bring the boom to an end. Governments will watch impotently from the sidelines as boom leads to crisis and to a depression with its attendant bankruptcies and unemployment. And if depressions were so easy to stop, why didn't the

Japanese, French or German governments stop their own respective depressions?

Workers have no interest in the productivity of British Capitalism against other countries; or the profitability of the companies they work in or the company's competitiveness.

Workers do not own the companies in which they work. They have no ownership and control over raw resources, production, transportation and distribution systems. And they have no country.

Marx summed up the correct interest of the working class. Take conscious political action. Think for yourselves. And abolish Capitalism and replace it with Socialism. It would not have been what Mr Brown or CBI employers would want someone to say; but then Marx wrote for the workers not the capitalists. He was not wine and dined by the employers' class and their representatives. Here is what Marx said:

A general rise in the rate of wages would result in a fall of the general rate of profit, but, broadly speaking, not affect the prices of commodities.

The general tendency of capitalist production is not to raise, but to sink the average standard of wages.

Trade Unions work well as centres of resistance against the encroachments of capital. They fail partially from an injudicious use of their power. They fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organised forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class, that is to say, the ultimate abolition of the wages system.

From **Wages, Price and Profit** an address delivered by Marx on June 20 and 27, 1865, at two sittings of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association. Originally published as a separate pamphlet in London in 1898. The rough draft by Marx had no title. Moscow edition, 1978 (p 55).

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1st Session : 12 noon

The emergence of Class. Is there a middle class?
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SUNDAY 28TH JUNE 1998

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